The United Nations Security Council: Topic A Primary Sources

Chemical Weapons

Here are primary sources that your moderator or legal chair thought would be helpful in gaining an understanding of the topic. These are by no means all of the sources available, just sources we wanted to highlight.

Source #1: **The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**
This source is the Chemical Weapons Convention which "aims to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction by prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of chemical weapons by States Parties." States agreed to discard any stockpiles of chemical weapons as well as destroy or convert the facilities that produced them. Some specific toxic chemicals, such as Sarin and Sulfur Mustards, and their antecedents fall under a reporting and verification regime. This is a great source to understand the current international legal framework for chemical weapons.
https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention

Sources #2: **Incident in Salisbury**
This source comes from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and details the organization's investigation into the chemical weapons attack in the United Kingdom in March 2018. While the United Kingdom separately investigated the attacks, the country also had the OPCW conduct its own, independent investigation of the incident. The OPCW investigation found that the attacks used a chemical nerve agent and confirmed the findings of the United Kingdom's own report.
https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/featured-topics/incident-salisbury

Source #3**: Resolution 2118 (2013)**
This Security Council resolution was passed in September 2013 in response to the use of chemical weapons by Bashar al-Assad's forces in the Syrian Civil War. The resolution endorsed the OPCW's decision and efforts to destroy chemical weapons stockpiles in Syria; determined that the use of chemical weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security; and decided that the Syrian government should comply and cooperate with efforts to destroy chemical weapons stockpiles. This is a great source to understand what specific actions the Security Council implemented after the use of chemical weapons in Syria.
https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2118.pdf

Source #4: **Security Council Deems Syria's Chemical Weapon's Declaration Incomplete, Urges Nation to Close Issues, Resolve Gaps, Inconsistencies, Discrepancies**
This is the text of a Security Council meeting held in March 2023 in which the Council discussed the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria—deeming the elimination of chemical weapons as incomplete and inconsistent. The Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs declared that Syria had failed to make progress on the destruction of chemical weapons since the last meeting and that the country had failed to resolve pending issues—including 20 that have been pending since 2019. The OPCW continues to plan for future inspection of chemical weapons sites, but Syria remains accused of moving the manufacture of chemical weapons to other sites.

While most members called on Syria to uphold it obligations, China and the Russian Federation questioned the need for regular meetings on the Syrian chemical weapons issue.
https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15220.doc.htm

Source #5: **Safety, Security and Dual-Use Chemicals**
This long report published in 2014 from the U.S. Department of Energy recounts the history of chemical weapons from the 1600s to the present day. Its more unique sections start on page 19 where the report discuss dual-use chemicals or those substances that have both a peaceful and harmful purpose. Many chemicals used as chemical weapons have a legitimate use in research and commercial activities. For example, dimethyl methyl phosphonate (DMMP) is a flame retardant, making buildings and material resistant to fires. However, DMMP can also be used to create a chemical weapon nerve agent. The report also details how the Aum Shinrikyo terror group in Japan in the 1990s used a common pesticide to manufacture sarin gas. Dual-use chemicals and technologies are difficult to ban as their prohibition would impact peaceful activities, this also make chemical weapons appealing to terror groups and some countries.
https://www.osti.gov/servlets/purl/1340249

Source #6: **Chemical Weapons: Frequently Asked Questions**
This is a great source to learn the basics about chemical weapons, it includes a description of chemical weapons, how they are delivered, when they have been used, who has them, and how they can be destroyed. Section V of the document highlights the status of riot control agents, such as tear gas, pepper spray, and mace. Technically riot control agents are a chemical weapon and are prohibited under the CWC as a method of warfare, but are allowed for domestic law enforcement purposes as long as countries declare which riot control agents they possess. Groups have started advocating for the prohibition of riot control agents even in domestic law enforcement situations, citing the CWC.
https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Chemical-Weapons-Frequently-Asked-Questions